

SECTION

4

READ TO DISCOVER

- 1 How did the Romans build a strong and unified empire?
- 2 How did citizens of the Roman Empire make a living and lead their daily lives?
- 3 What part did science and the arts play in the empire?

DEFINE

gladiators
aqueducts

IDENTIFY

Galen
Ptolemy
Virgil
Horace
Ovid
Tacitus
Plutarch

WHY IT MATTERS TODAY

European and American cultures have borrowed heavily from the culture of the early Romans. Use [CNN](#) or other **current event** sources to find a current example of an idea or object that is based on Roman culture. Record your findings in your journal.

Student
CNN NEWS.com

Roman Society and Culture

The Main Idea

Over the course of centuries, the Romans built a cultural heritage that continues to influence us today.

The Story Continues *The Pax Romana was one of the longest periods of peace and stability the world has ever known. As a result, the Romans made great advances, many of which affect people even today. If you were to travel to Europe today, for example, you could find your way by using the same road system built by the Romans two thousand years ago.*

Building a Strong Empire

Several factors helped the Romans build their empire and maintain order. First, the Romans organized a strong government and revised their laws. Second, widespread trade and good transportation strengthened the economy and unified the empire. Finally, a strong army defended the frontiers and controlled the provinces.

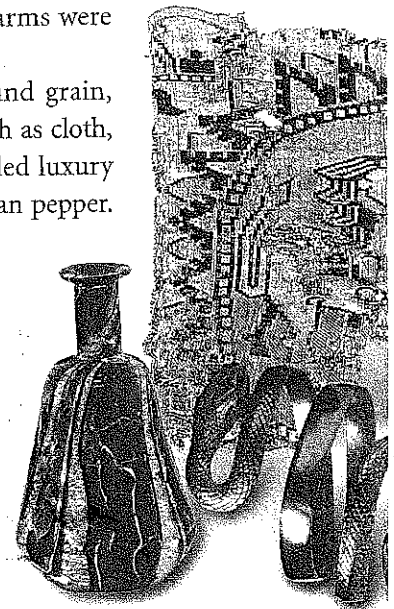
Government and law. The Roman government was the strongest unifying force in the empire. It helped keep order and enforce the laws. The emperor ran the government, made all policy decisions, and appointed officials of the provinces, including the provincial governors. These officials were responsible to the government in Rome for the effective, peaceful, and profitable administration of the provinces.

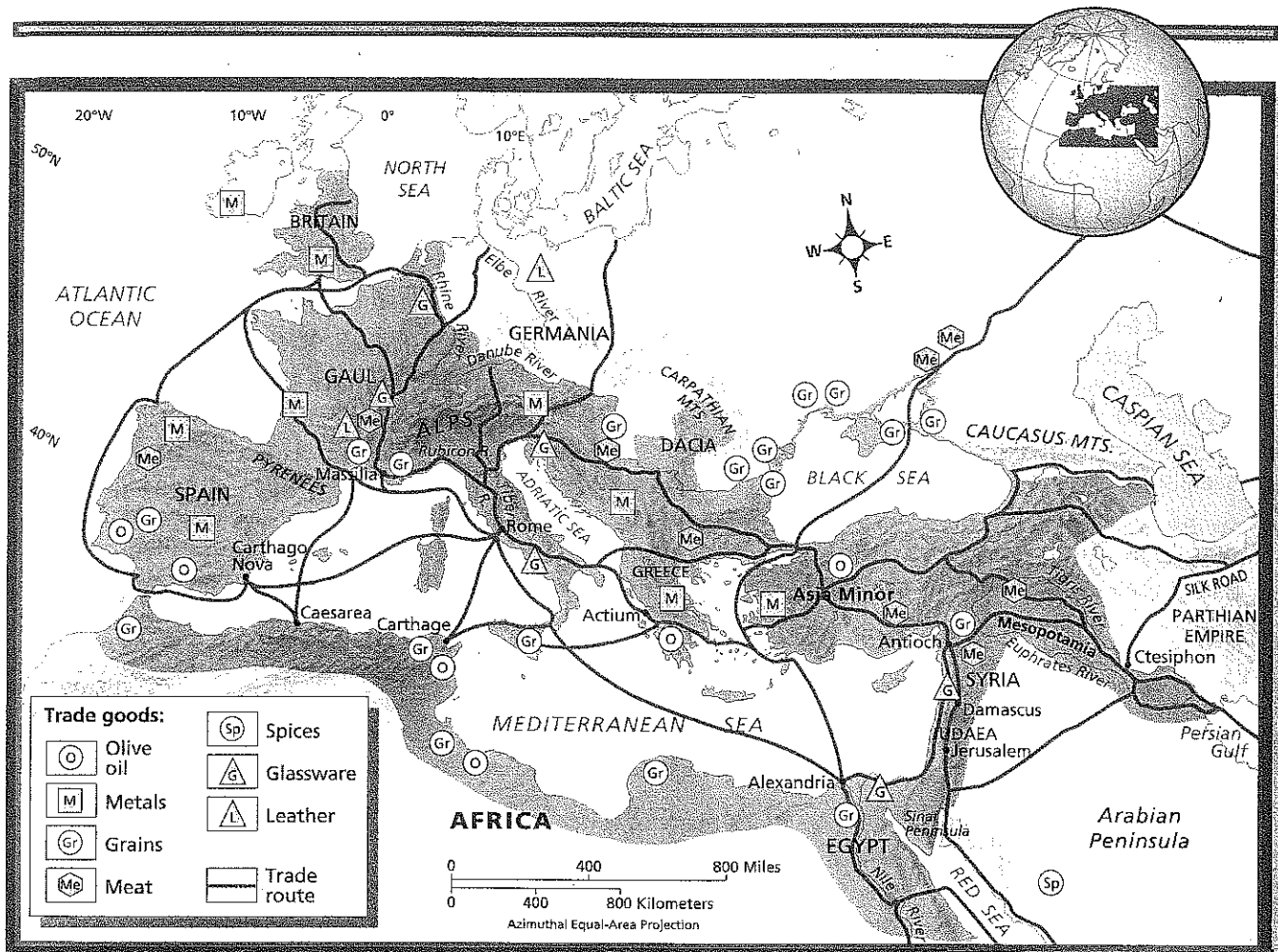
Roman law also helped unify the empire. To fit the needs of their huge empire, the Romans changed the laws—the code of the Twelve Tables—in two important ways. First, the government passed new laws as needed. Second, judges interpreted the old laws to fit new circumstances. Roman judges helped develop the belief that certain basic legal principles should apply to all humans. This idea came from the Greek view that law was dictated by nature and therefore common to all people.

Trade and transportation. Widespread trade of farm goods and other products also helped unify the empire. The Roman government developed policies that were designed to encourage trade and commerce. Throughout the time of the Pax Romana, agriculture was the most important occupation in the empire. In Italy many farmers worked on large estates. In the provinces, small farms were fairly common.

Most trade within the empire centered around grain, wine, oil, other food items, and everyday items such as cloth, pottery, and glassware. Foreign trade often included luxury goods such as African ivory, Chinese silk, and Indian pepper. Most of these goods ended up in Rome. From there, they could be carried to wealthy customers throughout the sprawling empire along its overland and seagoing trade routes.

During the Pax Romana, the Romans imported silk, linen, glassware, jewelry, and furniture from East Asia. From India came spices, cotton, and many luxuries new to the Romans.





Nearly everywhere it went during the Pax Romana, the Roman army built roads and bridges. These well-constructed road systems served to move reinforcements and supplies quickly. They also promoted trade, travel, and communication throughout the empire. About 60,000 miles of paved highways extended to army outposts. Bridges spanned rivers, and highways linked all provincial cities to Rome. These roads were built to last. The top pavement rested on several layers of broken stone and crushed chalk. The good surfaces made travel fast. This was especially true of Rome's major road systems, which were designed to carry heavy military and trade traffic.

The Roman army. The Roman army, too, helped strengthen the empire by keeping peace. Citizen soldiers served for 16 to 20 years in the Roman legions. They were stationed in large fortified camps along the frontiers. People often settled around these camps, which eventually grew into cities. Often men from the provinces or from border areas enlisted in the Roman army. In return they were promised Roman citizenship at the end of their enlistment. Thus a vast army of veterans guarded the frontiers.

If necessary, the army used force to maintain peace in the provinces. In A.D. 60, for example, an uprising in Britain left some 70,000 Romans and their allies dead. The army soon crushed the rebels and destroyed their lands. More often, however, provincial governors aligned themselves with local leaders. This helped ensure that the locals would work to keep the peace.

✓ **READING CHECK: Summarizing** What aspects of Roman rule helped unify and strengthen the Roman Empire?

Trade in the Roman Empire, A.D. 117

Interpreting Maps Although an improved system of roads made it easier to transport goods across land, most goods still traveled by sea or river in the A.D. 100s. Historians estimate that it was 28 times more expensive to move goods by land than by sea.

Skills Assessment:

1. The World in Spatial

Terms How far would it have been to move goods from Rome to Alexandria by sea? By land? **2. Drawing Conclusions** Why might the land route have been more expensive?

A ROMAN BANQUET MENU

Appetizers

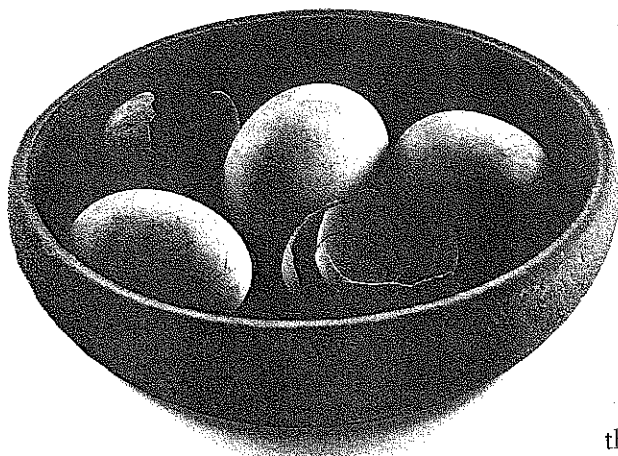
- ◆ Jellyfish and eggs
- ◆ Sow's udders stuffed with salted sea urchins
- ◆ Broiled tree fungi with peppered fish-fat sauce
- ◆ Sea urchins with spices, honey, oil and egg sauce

Main Course

- ◆ Fallowed deer roasted with onion sauce, rue, Jericho dates, raisins, oil and honey
- ◆ Boiled ostrich with sweet sauce
- ◆ Turtle dove boiled in its feathers
- ◆ Roasted parrot
- ◆ Dormice stuffed with pork and pine kernels
- ◆ Ham boiled with figs and bay leaves, rubbed with honey, baked in pastry crust
- ◆ Flamingo boiled with dates

Dessert

- ◆ Stewed roses with pastry
- ◆ Stoned dates stuffed with nuts and pine kernels, fried in honey
- ◆ Hot African sweet-wine cakes with honey



Bowl with remains of eggs recovered from a Roman site

Life in the Empire

The Pax Romana was a time of great prosperity throughout the empire. Citizens did not share equally in this wealth, however. While the rich enjoyed great luxuries, the majority of Romans were poor. Many of the free poor lived on the land. Some owned their own small plots, but many were laborers or tenant farmers. Others crowded into the cities. Slavery was also widespread in the empire.

Daily life. Rich citizens usually had both a city home and a country home. Each home had many conveniences, such as running water and baths. The rich had much time for recreation and leisure. They attended huge banquets, at which exotic foods, such as jellyfish or boiled ostrich, were often served. The historian Ammianus Marcellinus noted with contempt that the rich held dinner parties primarily to impress one another.



“Sometimes too at their dinner-parties scales are called for to weigh the fish, birds and dormice that are served. The guests are bored to death by repeated expressions of wonder at the unheard-of size of the creatures, especially when some thirty secretaries are in attendance with writing-cases and notebooks to take down the statistics.”

Ammianus Marcellinus, quoted in *Readings in the Classical Historians* by Michael Grant

In contrast, many of Rome's residents lived in crowded multistory apartment houses made of wood. The average Roman home was sparsely furnished with simple, very basic furniture made of wood. These pieces offered little style or comfort. Rome's working people could barely make a living. The government provided free grain to city residents, but food was still scarce. Most Romans ate simple meals that included bread, cheese, and fruit.

Slaves and slavery. Slaves were among the least fortunate of the empire's population. Historians estimate that by the time Augustus took power, there were several million slaves in Italy representing a large fraction of the entire population. Slavery was also common in the eastern empire, where it had existed for centuries. It was much less common in Britain and other parts of the western empire.

Life could be cruel for slaves. Until the mid-second century A.D., there was nothing to stop masters from treating slaves in any way they wished. Records indicate that slaves who worked the mines or large farms were often treated with extreme harshness and brutality. Life was probably better for household slaves. Often, skilled slaves held positions of trust, serving as doctors, teachers, or secretaries. Unlike slaves in Greece, Roman slaves could buy their freedom or be freed by order of their masters. Nevertheless, Roman slaves enjoyed few legal rights or protections and were dependent on the good will of their masters.

Historians do not believe that slavery was essential to the Roman economy. With so many poor workers available, the labor of a free worker would have been as cheap as—or cheaper than—slave labor. A person gained status, as well as an easier lifestyle, by owning slaves.

The roles of men, women, and children. The family was at the heart of Roman society. The father held most of the power. He made all important decisions, controlled family property, and conducted religious ceremonies. Women were not without power, however. The mother managed the household, did the buying of food and household needs, and helped her husband entertain guests. Evidence indicates that women also participated in family decision-making. By the end of the republic, moreover, women—especially among the patrician class—had political influence. Women could also own property and accept inheritances.

Early education took place at home. Fathers taught their sons the duties of citizenship, while mothers taught their daughters to manage a household. Children from the richest families continued their formal education at home. Other children attended schools throughout the empire. Boys and girls entered elementary school at a relatively early age to study reading, writing, arithmetic, and music. If their families could afford it, boys went on to secondary school, where they studied grammar, Greek, literature, composition, and expressive speech. In most cases, girls did not receive as lengthy an education as did boys.

Religion. The early Romans sought to achieve harmony with their gods. These included the *lares* (LAIR-eez), who were ancestral spirits. Family worship focused on Vesta, the spirit who guarded fire and hearth. Over time, Roman religious beliefs were increasingly influenced by Greek thought.

By the time of the empire, a state religion had evolved. Based on the old family religion, this state religion had its own temples, ceremonies, and processions. Its purpose was to promote patriotism and loyalty to the state. In 12 B.C. Augustus became its chief priest. Since the Romans believed that gods and spirits were everywhere, it was necessary to please them through rituals and sacrifice. Thus, religious ritual was a part of daily and state life.

Fun and games. The Romans enjoyed many types of amusements and entertainment. They liked the theater, particularly comedies and satires. Mimes, jugglers, dancers, acrobats, and clowns were all popular. Romans also enjoyed brutal sports. Many spectators watched chariot racing in the huge Circus Maximus of Rome, a race-track that could hold thousands of spectators. Romans also flocked to the Colosseum, the great arena in Rome. Wild beasts, made more fierce by hunger, fought humans or other animals in the arena. Combat between **gladiators**—trained fighters who were usually slaves—drew the largest crowds. A gladiator fight most often ended in death for one or both men. Public executions of criminals also drew large crowds and served as a warning to would-be lawbreakers. Sometimes these executions took the form of public combat between two or more condemned criminals. The Roman senator Seneca described one such public execution.



“The combatants have absolutely no protection. Their whole bodies are exposed to one another’s blows and thus each never fails to injure his opponent. . . . The spectators demand that combatants who have killed their opponents be thrown to combatants who will in turn kill them. . . . For every combatant, therefore, the outcome is certain death.”

Seneca, quoted in *Egypt, Greece and Rome* by Charles Freeman

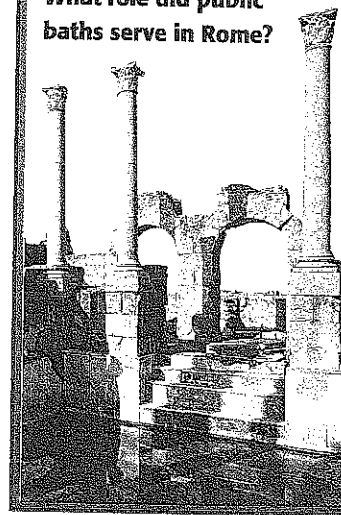
DAILY LIFE

Baths

The Romans were fond of bathing, and they built baths wherever they settled. The baths were often filled with water of different temperatures. Bathers would go from one pool to another. They combined the dips with exercises followed by massages with fine oils. Romans used public baths as social gathering places. Here people could meet, gossip, and even carry on business.

Today public baths are popular gathering places throughout Japan and other countries. In the United States, public swimming pools serve the same purpose as the Roman baths.

What role did public baths serve in Rome?



✓ **READING CHECK: Summarizing** What was daily life like for the Romans?

Science and the Arts

The Romans were a practical people who were not much interested in learning just to learn. Rather, they wanted to collect and organize information and put it to use.

Science, engineering, and architecture. During the A.D. 100s, the physician Galen wrote several volumes that summarized all the medical knowledge of his day. For centuries people thought he was the greatest authority on medicine. People also accepted Ptolemy's theories of astronomy for almost 1,500 years. Ptolemy, a scientist and scholar from the great Egyptian city of Alexandria, developed a system of astronomy and geography—the Ptolemaic system—based on the belief that the sun, the planets, and the stars revolved around the earth. Ptolemy's studies in geography contributed to the classical world's understanding of the earth's physical features.

The Romans used scientific knowledge from the Greeks to plan cities, build water and sewage systems, and improve farming and livestock breeding. Roman engineers were masters at building roads, bridges, arenas, and public buildings. In most cities, the Romans built **aqueducts**. These bridgelike structures carried water from the mountains.

The Romans, unlike the Greeks, knew how to build the arch and the vaulted dome. The most important contribution of Roman architects, however, was the use of concrete, which made large buildings possible. Roman architects designed great public buildings—courthouses, palaces, temples, arenas, and triumphal arches—for the emperor and the government. Their buildings were large as well as pleasing to the eye.

CONNECTING TO Science and Technology

The Roman aqueduct system carried water from the mountains to the city, often by aboveground channels. These channels occasionally ran over valleys

The Roman Aqueducts

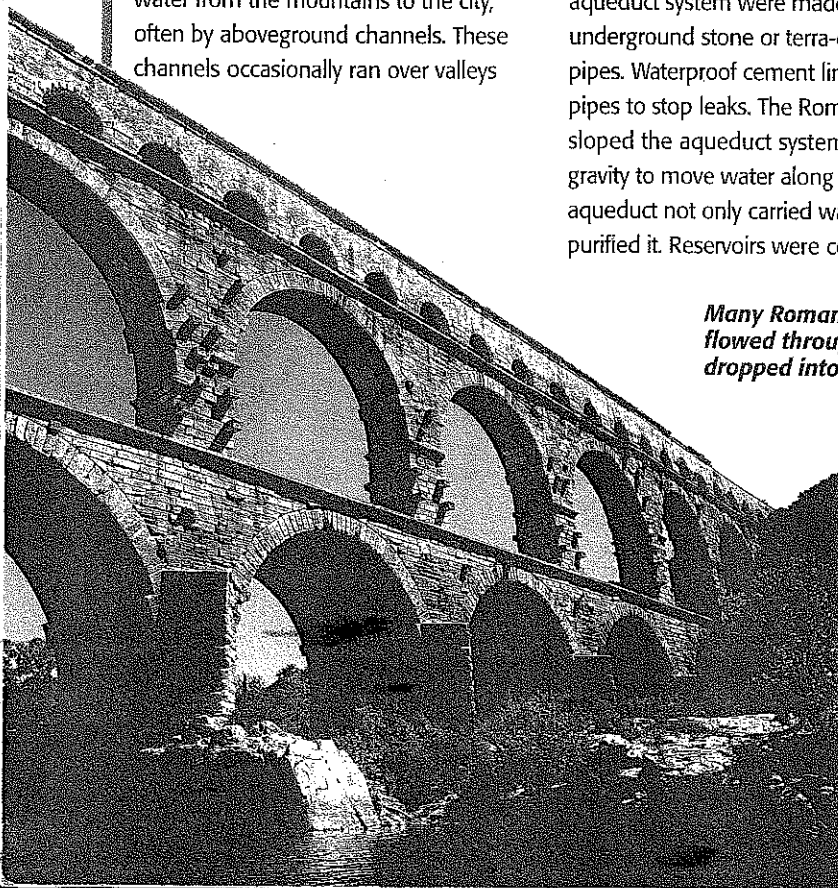
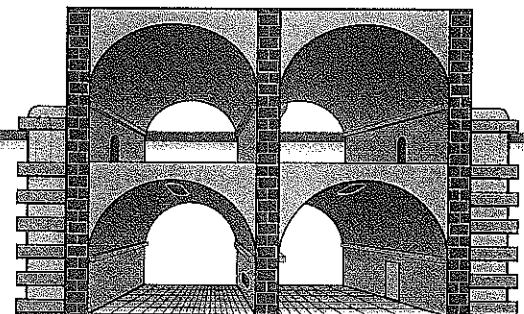
on stone arches. Other parts of the aqueduct system were made of underground stone or terra-cotta pipes. Waterproof cement lined the pipes to stop leaks. The Romans carefully sloped the aqueduct system to allow gravity to move water along its path. An aqueduct not only carried water, it also purified it. Reservoirs were constructed

along the aqueduct course. Sediment carried in the water was deposited in these reservoirs.

Understanding Science and Technology

How does the structure of the aqueduct system enable gravity to cause water to flow?

Many Roman aqueducts contained filtering systems. Water flowed through the filter's upper chambers. Dirt and sediment dropped into lower chambers, which were periodically cleaned.

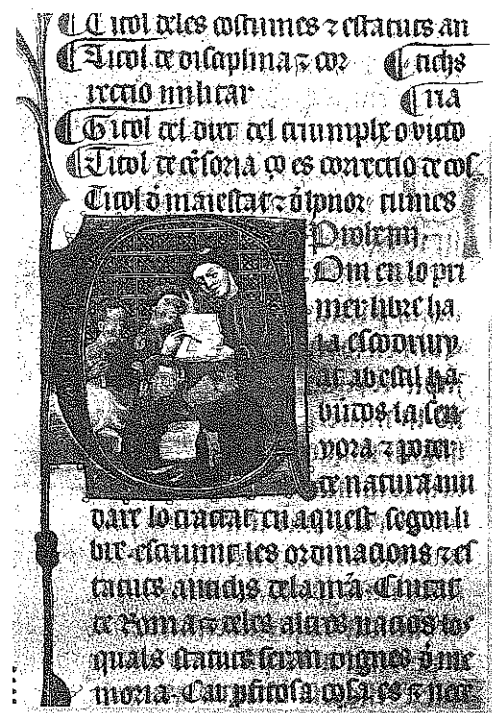


Literature. Augustus and several of the Good Emperors encouraged the development of art and literature. **Virgil**, who lived during Augustus's reign, was the greatest of the Roman poets. His epic poem, the *Aeneid*, tells the story of Aeneas, a prince of Troy. Another Roman poet, **Horace**, wrote of human emotions in odes, satires, and epistles (letters). A third poet, **Ovid**, wrote love lyrics and the *Metamorphoses*, a collection of myths written in verse. The great Roman historian **Tacitus** wrote *Annals*, a history of Rome under the Julio-Claudian emperors. In this work, Tacitus expresses his criticism of the government set up by Augustus. Tacitus was especially concerned with the growing gap between rich and poor and with the decline of Roman moral standards. He strongly criticized the pampered and luxurious lifestyles of the wealthy and the loss of public virtue and respect for the rule of law. Tacitus called for a return to the simpler, more straightforward and traditional behavior that he believed had characterized the republic. **Plutarch**, a Greek, wrote *Parallel Lives*, a collection of Greek and Roman biographies. Each description of a famous Greek is followed by a description of a Roman whose life is similar to the Greek's life in some important way.

Language. Romans learned the alphabet from the Etruscans, who had adapted the Greeks' alphabet. Later they changed some of the letters. Today we use the Roman, or Latin, alphabet of 23 letters, plus *J*, *Y*, and *W*, which the English added after Roman times.

Long after the end of the Roman Empire, the Latin language continued to be used in most of Europe. The Roman Catholic Church held services in Latin until the A.D. 1960s. Latin is the parent of the modern Romance (from the word *Roman*) languages. These include Italian, French, Spanish, Portuguese, and Romanian. Many of the scientific terms we use today have either Greek or Latin origins. In fact, a large fraction of all English words have Latin origins.

✓ **READING CHECK: Analyzing Information** In what ways did the Romans contribute to science, architecture, literature, and language?



INTERPRETING THE VISUAL RECORD

Latin Nearly all medieval European universities used Latin in their classes. *What does this page tell us about the impact of the Latin language over time?*

SECTION 4 REVIEW

1. **Define** and explain the significance:
gladiators
aqueducts

3. **Summarizing** Make a chart like this to summarize the lives of the Romans.

2. **Identify** and explain the significance:
Galen
Ptolemy
Virgil
Horace
Ovid
Tacitus
Plutarch

	Description
Daily Life	
Slavery	
Roles of men and women	
Religion	
Entertainment	

4. **Finding the Main Idea**

- What factors contributed to the strength of the Roman Empire? How?
- What do you think are the five most important contributions the Romans made to law and government, engineering and architecture, and literature and language? Explain your answers.

5. **Writing and Critical Thinking**

Making Generalizations Imagine that you are a teenager belonging to the upper class and living in the Roman Empire during the Pax Romana. Write a short diary entry recounting the events of a typical day.

Consider:

- the importance of your family
- the kind of schooling and education you receive
- how being a boy or a girl influences your life

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